

/27 cont./

861 respected. This sudden reaction may be due to personal feelings of the parents; for example, when the mother is repressing some disappointment she will often relieve her feelings by punishing her child, somewhat unjustly, for some fault or faults previously committed. However, it may be that naughtiness is immediately followed by punishment.

Furthermore, the parents being confronted with a repetition of an act previously punished, persistently remind the child of what he suffered before and the possibility of again feeling more severe punishment because of his repeated disobedience, or they simply show him the objects used to press him with a view to compelling him to submit to the paternal will.

The most common causes for punishment are the following:

- 862 1. Acts against normal feeding habits, such as stealing food,
673 frequently practiced by children for various reasons: a) because
● he is the last to receive his helping at mealtime; b) because adults
ostensibly get preference when any special dish is being served;
c) because in times of scarcity it is the elders who avail themselves
of the short rations, which provokes a feeling of inferiority in the
child that his hunger helps to emphasize and forces him to steal
to remedy the situation. This theft may be /28/ of several kinds:
Stealing of food which is immediately eaten, since it is cooked
or does not require cooking, such as chicha, milk, cheese,
panela, sweets, fruit, or a special dish that the mother is keeping
in expectation of a visitor or is meant for her husband or an inva-
lid. To steal this food that the mother hangs from the ceiling
or puts in some hiding place means that the child must take ad-
vantage of some carelessness on the part of the mother to carry
out his act.

Another kind is the theft of food that is not to be eaten im-
mediately but that is taken to be hidden and eaten later when he
needs it -- while away from home pasturing the animals or when
going off surreptitiously to hunt.

Another form of food stealing is that done by the eldest brother
or the one with a sweeter tooth than the others. On being handed

/28 cont./

862 their share of food, they quickly eat theirs and wait till the mother
673 is not there to snatch the share of a younger or weaker brother by
force, by stealth, by deception, by false promises, or by coercion
in some form, such as threatening to reveal to the parents some
misdeed not known to them.

862 In general, the growing Guajiro child is never satisfied with
261 the amount of food he gets, and in his craving for more he places
no normal restraint on his appetite. He is always capable of eat-
ing more than he can normally hold, even to the point of suffer-
ing, in the hope of building up a reserve or because, feeling him-
self undernourished, he finds pleasure and satisfaction in eating to
repletion. He always eats as if he were starving, which some-
times is the case, but at other times is only the remembrance of
past hunger and the fear of its repetition.

Parents believe that the habit of these small thefts may lead
to bigger robberies from people not relatives, which would bring
about a series of troubles to the family group to which the young
delinquent belongs. Also, the food stolen may be necessary and
even indispensable for home use, and the theft means that an
adult, a sick relative, or a visitor whom they wish or need to look
after is deprived of it. One has to bear in mind that in certain
parts of the country the sources of food supplies are so few that
food is scrupulously rationed to last out until new supplies become
available.

Children are also punished as their parents want them to be-
have abstemiously and uncomplainingly during the long spells of
scarcity so frequent in this country, /29/ although they have their
reward later when, in time of abundant harvest, food is plentiful
and extravagantly used, only sufficient seed being retained for the
next sowing. During these times of scarcity the Guajiro lives on
a very reduced food ration and puts up with hunger and thirst to
an incredible degree, and mothers want their children to achieve
a similar standard: to behave like adults in such circumstances.

862 A further motive for correction and punishment is when the
571 child refuses to share the food that has been given to him or that

[92 cont.]

177 The previous statement is borne out to such a point that
789 even in native communities that are quite homogeneous, anthro-
pologically speaking, as is La Guajira, it is difficult to learn
which beliefs, which practices of magic or of sorcery, are
autochthonous and which are acculturations due to contacts with
the neighboring mestizos who, given the circumstances we have
noted of being in the greater part mulattos, have a considerable
collection of this type of beliefs and practices inherited largely
from their Negro ancestors.

As it is totally impossible for us to make a list of the
origin of all and each one of the autochthonous Guajiro beliefs,
we shall have to confine ourselves to showing the similarities
which they have in the whole of Colombian folklore. It is clear
that this similarity will not always indicate acculturation, but
only similarity due to the influence of other native groups that
have disappeared but who once lived in Colombian territory, or
exact beliefs which reached there from other continents and
which can only be explained by the general evolutionary process
of human mentality.

799 Characteristics of charms. 1. Some charms can be lent by
[42] their owner to another person, if both the owner and [93] the
borrower are of the same sex and if the charm is to be used by
the borrower so that he may benefit by its virtues.

[263] 2. *To make use of them, the individual during the period*
of action must submit himself to a special, very strict diet.
The breaking of any one of the norms will cancel the effect and
bring about serious prejudice to health, if not results contrary to
what he had looked for and expected. The way to carry out this
diet will be found described in the following section, "Application
and Effects."

3. It is sufficient for a stranger to look at the magic object
belonging to someone else for all its magic power to be trans-
ferred to him. For this reason it is an indispensable requisite to
keep it safely from other people's sight and always to be wary of
this type of violation.

438 4. It is very difficult to obtain a true charm because while
789 those who sell these are old women very practiced in this art,
675 many unscrupulous women often devote themselves to the trade

[93 cont.]

458 in charms, which usually have no magic value and are a com-
781 plete fraud. These women are accustomed to putting in a small
673 wool bag something that has the appearance of a charm and
selling it as the legitimate article.

632 5. A love charm is worth about 300 Colombian pesos, and
435 just the loan of it for a few days to a friend for him to get the
426 desired results is paid for. Such a temporary loan is worth 100
Colombian pesos.

632 6. Besides the love charms which are strictly Guajiro,
[74] there are others that the so-called "Gocha" women sell. There
are many of these women in Maracaibo and Zulia. Unfortunately,
we could not obtain any special data about these makers of magic
charms, of whom there are many on the eastern borders of La
Guajira.

7. The charms serve equally for either sex; what varies
is in general terms the effects of the charm.

8. Some personal objects, such as hair, sandals, etc.,
may form the basis of a love charm of great magic potential.
This potential is above all due to the possession of a part of the
personality of the person whom one wishes to harm.

9. Different love charms can be mixed together.

10. Charms may be acquired among civilizados. This kind
of magic material is carefully kept in glass containers made
especially for this purpose. [94]

Love charms. The Guajiro Indian, man or woman, knows
and uses different charms to attract or repel love. They have
them of different classes as regards form, preparation, and raw
material. Some of them are the following:

a) One has the shape and general appearance of the excre-
ment of the machorro, (a species of lizard). It has been stated
that one of the magic objects used by the shaman is a small wool
bag containing a paste prepared by a herbalist that is in the shape
of goat excrement and is used to attract the spirits.

b) Another, which is kept inside a small glass receptacle,
looks like a stone and is accompanied by some small pieces of
coral.

c) Another is made in the following way: The root of a
herb, very abundant on Itojoro Hill, is ground and [the paste]

[95 cont.]

832 Once she has finished her bath, she must hang up her dress over her hammock to dry, also inside the house. It is also necessary for her to apply achiote powder to certain parts of her body, such as under her arms, on her breasts, on her genital organs, etc., with the object of aiding the magic action of the charm on those parts, and avoiding the loss or lessening of the magic power. This special regimen must be carried through for four consecutive days, at the end of which the effect has already been obtained or at least there is no longer the fear that it may pass to some other person.

In general, every man or woman who possesses a charm keeps his body (armpits, breasts, genital organs, etc.) permanently dusted with achiote powder.

The men also make use of the same charms as the women. The magic power of these charms enables them to obtain the wholehearted love of women without their own affections becoming involved.

881 When a young woman reaches the age of puberty, and her
832 first menstrual period arrives, a love charm is hung about her neck during all the time that she is kept indoors and hanging up in her hammock (ritual of initiation of young girls). This charm will give her the quality of being admired and loved by men. The plan in wearing this token is that when she leaves her seclusion she will find the man who will buy her for a wife at a good price. The charm is hung about the adolescent girl's neck by her mother or by a maternal aunt.

832 When a girl's mother or aunt finds out that she has not been happy in her love life, they obtain charms which will make her more lovable and desirable.

832 Women should be very careful of their hair when it has
673 been cut after the appearance of their first menstruation because if a man gets hold of it he practically becomes the owner of the woman, for by mixing it with hummingbird blood, dog's tail, and achiote he can make a charm which will act directly against the owner of the hair. The man, with the firm intention of causing her harm, may show her the charm or better still may produce it when she has her back to him. [96] The woman because of this simple charm becomes madly enamored with the man

[96 cont.]

832 and is made foolish and boastful of the difficult position she is
673 placed in.

This charm, capable of such mischief according to the belief of the natives, is used especially when a man wishes to cause some woman harm or to mock either her or her relatives.

754 Fortunately for women in general they have a way to scoff
432 at, or revenge themselves on, the men who have been false
578 and whose love they no longer want — only revenge. For such cases they buy a charm from the old Indian women who know of these things, a charm which they place among the clothing of the man on whom they wish to effect a malevolent action. Then they obtain an old sandal belonging to their victim and burn it. It is most important that the sandal should be old so that the sweat of the man in question, as part of his personality, 826
828 should have soaked into it.

With these two simple things, the Indian women affirm, the man loses his senses, he goes about as if stupefied, neglects his person, is a failure and a brutish person thereafter. So sure are they of this that they say that a mad Indian living in Nazaret is in that condition because of a charm like that we have just described after he had been one of the most elegant and well dressed of Indians.

832 Another love charm is used not to regain a man's love that has been lost but to retain affection that is desired; and as it is the woman's property — for evil against the man — this aims at making the man unable to take another woman. This charm, like others, is obtained from the old Indian women of the Sierra de Jarara, and it is made of carefully ground herbs to which they add achiote, an excellent substance for charms. The mixture is wrapped in a rag, or it is kept in a little wool bag.

The effect of love charms can be diverted to other purposes. For example, when a woman wants her husband to make her a special present she goes to her charm, picks it up, shakes it well, and looks firmly at it, at the same time asking for the desired object. The charm works, and the woman obtains what she wished for.

Necklaces of small perforated discs of coconut shell are transformed into love charms when the women experts in this

TOWARDS A MIRAGE

57

not far from the mission station. Ituhor means 'roast corn' 133 and it does look like a dark golden brown giant corn-cob. [103] Suddenly we were in a valley that was all green. We had to rub our eyes. Not only grass grew there, but tall trees with [137] fresh green leaves. The crests of coconut palms waved high above them. We saw bananas, maize, and all sorts of fruit trees. What a miracle! The cause of it was a little stream that had water in it almost all the year round, though it petered out in sand on its way to the sea. We enjoyed the greenery, the smells and the bird song, and watched the multi-coloured butterflies. The valley was not inhabited; it was a field. After that we came to more white sand, where everything was just as arid as before.

Nazaret lay in the middle of this sea of sand. Ahead of us we saw some whitewashed buildings with grass roofs and one larger building with a turret. A monk came walking briskly to greet us, his white beard waving in the breeze. This was Father Salvador, whom we knew from a trip we had made farther south five years before. He had then been stationed at the foot of the Andes and his flowing beard had been brown. How old he had grown! The desert seemed to have aged him by twenty years at least, we thought. Then the other monks emerged and friendly nuns took charge of my wife. 797

We had good, sweet water, decent food and black coffee. The kindly fathers at once set about preparing a white-washed hut for us. They wanted us to stay for some time, make Nazaret our headquarters, from which we could go to the Indian camps in the surrounding country, which we would thus get to know. They would also find us good guides.

Then our Indians arrived with our baggage. We paid 694 them and dismissed them. We could not help laughing when 677 Gaffer insisted that he could be of great use to us as a guide, for he had neither been there before, nor even been able to find his way there. His old wife had taken advantage of our absence to appropriate a number of our things, including an aluminium saucepan. This came to light because her pack looked suspiciously bulky and had to be searched, to her

609 great indignation. In those parts to which civilization had
673 penetrated, it was not considered shameful to steal, provided you were not discovered.

Why do all semi-civilized natives, whether Indians or negroes, steal like jackdaws, while primitive peoples in the jungle respect each other's property? Stealing had become a sport with the half-bred Guajiros, but the Indian law was still enforced: he who was discovered had to replace what he had stolen and pay compensation as well.

The old man took advantage of the confusion to make off. When we had finished with his wife, he and his donkeys had gone, and his spouse had to follow on foot, swearing and cursing as hard as she could.

115 The two younger Indians did not go with the old couple.
124 They received half a bag of maize and were delighted. It should have lasted them the whole way back and more, but I am sure that they cooked it all, as soon as they could borrow a pot, eating more than they had ever done before and treating everyone else, and probably going hungry for the rest of the way home.

We had wanted to give The Lad a hat, a thing for which he longed, as he had spent the last few days trying to explain to my wife, for whom he had a great admiration and for whose help he was hoping. He had been sure that there would be hats to be had at Nazaret. But of Nazaret both he and we had had exaggerated ideas. It was a mission station, not a trading post. The monks did not sell hats, and they possessed but one apiece. The Lad had earned a hat and would have had one, had it been possible; but he had to walk away as bare of head as he came.